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Deadly freeze hits northern US



The statue of former Boston mayor James Michael Curley is buried in snow after an overnight snow storm

NEW YORK (AFP) - A fierce winter storm brought chaos to the northern United States on Friday, killing at least 11 people and forcing the cancellation of thousands of flights.

More than 24 inches (61 centimeters) of snow fell in parts of Massachusetts town as a state of emergency was declared in New York and New Jersey states.

One worker was killed when a 100-foot pile of salt being prepared to treat roads in the Philadelphia region fell on him, media reports said.

A 71-year-old woman suffering from Alzheimer's disease froze to death after walking out into the cold and getting lost in northern New York state, authorities said.

At least nine other deaths were blamed on the storm -- named Hercules -- that caused traffic accidents and other disruption across 22 states and parts of Canada.

Hercules closed major roads for several hours with snowdrifts built up by Arctic winds of up to 65 miles (105 kilometers) per hour.

Weather experts said the windchill temperature would plummet to -13 Fahrenheit (-25 Celsius) in New York state.

More than 4,200 international and domestic flights

were cancelled at airports along the east coast and as far as Chicago on Thursday night and Friday. Thousands more were delayed.

New York's John F. Kennedy Airport closed for several hours because of poor visibility and high winds.

Flights were also canceled at Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and other key airports.

Boston woke up to a temperature of about three degrees Fahrenheit (minus 16 Celsius) but with the wind chill, it felt much worse.

Essex county in Massachusetts recorded 24 inches (61 centimetres) of snow. Much of the state's Atlantic coastline was put on flood alert.

The New York and New Jersey governors ordered major roads closed during the worst of the blizzard, but they were reopened on Friday morning.

Government leaders still appealed for people to stay home unless they had urgent business.

The storm was the first big test for New York City's new Mayor Bill de Blasio, who only took up his job Wednesday.

De Blasio had vowed a "laser focus" on the storm. But the mayor also urged residents to stay indoors and warned

against going out in the freezing temperatures.

De Blasio shoveled snow from in front of his Brooklyn house Friday before repeating appeals for drivers to stay off the streets to help the city clear its 6,200 miles (9,900 kilometers) of roads.

"If you want safe, clear streets, stay home," he said.

Tourists lobbed snowballs at each other in Times Square and more than six inches of snow fell on Central Park.

But 450 salt spreaders were out across the city and 1,700 refuse trucks had been fitted with plows in a bid to keep New York moving. The city set up a special website and app, PlowNYC, so residents could follow street clearances in real time.

Many metro trains were canceled or delayed however and schools and many businesses remained closed in all the affected states.

And sub-freezing temperatures are expected as far south as Florida, the National Weather Service said.

Officials backed de Blasio's warning about going out in the cold as night fell again and temperatures plummeted.

Experts said that winds of 30 miles per hour could cause frostbite in about 30 minutes.

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Rio heatwave sets off sprinklers

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) - Soaring temperatures in Rio de Janeiro set off the fire sprinklers Friday in a downtown shopping mall as the thermometer topped 40 degrees Celsius (102 degrees Fahrenheit).

In the sunshine, temperatures rose to 50 degrees Celsius, leaving residents of the metropolis gasping. In the sunshine, temperatures rose to 50 degrees Celsius, leaving residents of the metropolis gasping.

But customers taking refuge indoors at Shopping Leblon gained unexpected relief when the sprinklers came on.

"Owing to the high temperature registered in the city we had the sprinklers come on automatically. Things got back to normal in 20 minutes and the mall has been cleaned up," the center said on its Twitter feed.

Brazil's Meteorological Office recorded temperatures soaring from a low of 24 degrees Celsius to beyond 40 at some points of the city, sending residents and New Year tourists alike streaming to the

beaches to seek respite in the sea.

The sticky conditions proved too much for the air conditioning systems at Rio's Galeao international airport and Santos Dumont domestic airport, leaving commuters baking in indoor temperatures topping 30 degrees Celsius, Globo television reported.

Brazil's shoddy airports are a major worry heading into the World Cup in just over five months with many overhauls delayed or scrapped. About 500,000 foreign visitors are expected, stretching airport capacity at 12 venues across the continent-size country.

Airport capacity and delays in completing 12 stadiums are major worries with football fans facing flight delays and likely confusion around just-completed venues. Many say that last-minute airport renovations will not eliminate operations problems across the system.

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Guardian Group Fatum presents baskets to their clients



ORANJESTAD -- Especially for the holiday season Guardian Group Fatum presented their clients with a beautiful basket and a sun-shade. This special gift was given to clients who met with the necessary requirements by law rapidly.

Based on the change in law regarding money laundering and terrorism, Guardian Group Fatum initiated a special promotion among their clients whom presented the required documents at their office. The promotion was very successful as the clients did their utmost to be on time with the required documents so they could be in the game to win a prize.

The clients who delivered

on time participated to win a basket, which was recently

presented to them.

Pictured are some of the winners: Glenda Pietersz Malusca Schmidt, Chavier E. Martina, and Mrs. Madel Jacopucci of Guardian Group Fatum.

The other winners were: Jean K. Joseph, Milton Henriquez, Lynell Bernadina, Ogenio Toppenberg, Michael York, Guido Alexander Rossetti Bracho y Arthur Thomas Hinkel.

The new law prescribes that all clients of an insurance company must present a valid identity before they can be at-

tended by the insurance company. The company must have among others: a valid identification and a proof of the clients correct address on file.

Clients who have not yet presented the necessary information still have the opportunity to do so and also participate in the campaign to win prizes by presenting their documents personally and on time to meet the requirements regarding the law of money laundering and terrorism, said a Guardian Group Fatum spokesperson.



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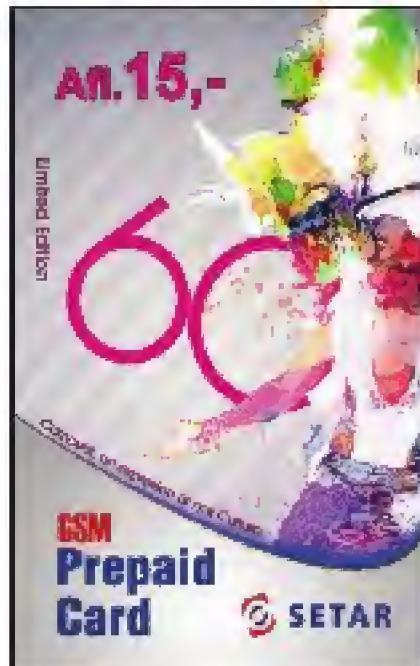


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SETAR looks back on 2013 with satisfaction



SETAR opened 2013 with a AFIs.10.000 raffle among their clients and closed with a AFIs.50.000 cash prize raffled among clients. Five clients won the amount of AFIs.10.000 each. The raffle and other prizes during the entire year were many and varied.

One such activity which caught much attention in 2013 was the successful Setar Gaming Event in which new games were introduced and entire families participated for two days long.

In 2013 SETAR also introduced the BlackBerry Z10 and Q10 and became the authorized reseller of the Apple Company on Aruba. They brought the iPhone 5s and 5c



to Aruba with attractive promotions. SETAR also introduced "HBO on Demand," Upgraded their Electronic Cable TV guide, the "Roaming Bundles" service and the "Unlimited packages" for cellular.

During 2013 Setar informed the public that they were ready for LTE 4G and soon would introduce speeds never seen before for their LTE devices. In 2013 they also introduced the new online service MiSETAR for all clients to use on a 24/7 basis at their convenience.

As the number one telecommunications company on Aruba SETAR has been very involved in the Aruban community. They have helped many organizations, foundations and instances in our community.

Some of the big contributions made by SETAR during the year were: their sponsorship of the Musica Foundation, Kite competition, Voz-i-Landia Escolar, Dande and March 18th Aruba's Flag and Anthem Day, Green Education symposium, Junior League Latin America Tournament and the Dare to Dream Foundation of Xander Bogaerts. Of course SETAR is also partnered with SAC (Aruba's Carnaval Organisation) in connection with Aruba's Grand 60th Carnival Celebration. SETAR will introduce a special app and telephone card commemorating this grand event.

During 2013 Setar was also host and organizer of different conferences of international caliber on the field of telecommunications in



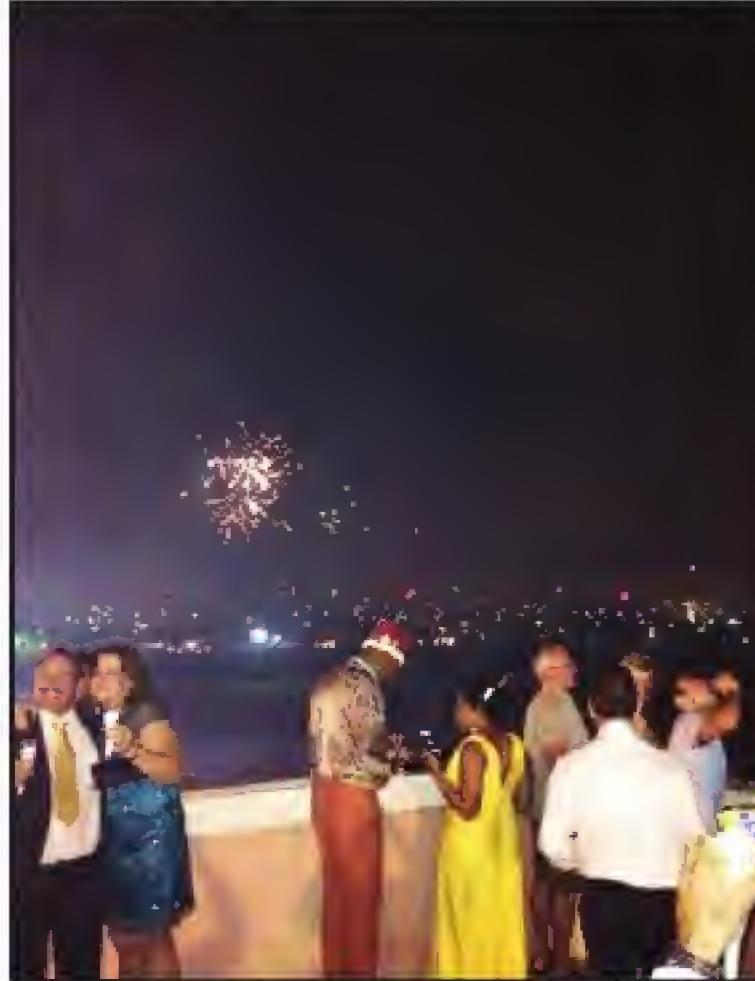
Aruba. They organized, among others, the annual CANTO conference (Caribbean National Telecom Organizations). Some 500 persons participated in that conference and exhibition. Another conference was the LACNIC 2013 and GSM LABARG 2013.

SETAR will continue working hard, providing clients and the entire community of Aruba the best of service and best quality. SETAR is very grateful to all their clients and employees and wish all a prosperous New Year 2014!

"O" Restaurant cited by contributing Forbes writer John Giuffo



Dande performers at O's to welcome the New Year
Forbes Magazine and Village Voice Contributing Writer John Giuffo, author of the column "Small World, Big Mouth" spent his New Year's on Aruba, simply as a guest and observer. His motto: "I



Enjoying fireworks from the rooftop garage

travel, look for good food when I do, and I write about both." An enviable vocation indeed! On January 2, his assessment of the island's offerings were a featured column on the Forbes Magazine website, titled "Aruba's Surprisingly Impressive New Year's Eve."

Admittedly, the column is a mixed review. His initial impressions of Aruba, with all the name food franchises that populate Palm Beach, which could be easily found in his neighborhood, are not what he expected or hoped for in his Caribbean sojourn. His superficial assessment is not uncommon when encountering the island for the first time, without venturing beyond the areas developed by the resorts. He would have preferred a more authentic Aruban experience, which can be easily obtained with

concierges are strictly required by their resorts to only promote companies which maintain tour desks or have agreements with the resorts. However, the Internet is easily accessible and a wealth of information is readily had via comments and recommendation by frequent visitors from a number of websites.

Despite his initial disenchantment, Mr. Giuffo was completely turned around after experiencing the excitement and wonder of New Year's Eve on Aruba. He only had glowing praise for the spectacle of the island alight with fireworks in every direction from his vantage point on the top level of the Paseo Herencia Shopping Mall parking lot. Another superstar that contributed to his positive experience was the New Year's Eve Party at the new "O" Restaurant, on the second level of the mall.

"O" opened its doors in early December, taking over the spot that was originally "Mr. Jazz." Unfortunately, it is the former establishment to which Mr. Giuffo links to in his article; for up to date information, visit their FB page: <https://www.facebook.com/OAruba>



John Giuffo

Owner/Manager of "O," Edjean Seineleer, is a charming host and one of Aruba's most beloved singing stars, a smooth baritone noted for his Frank Sinatra tributes. Mr. Giuffo enjoyed the "old school romance" a of the club, with the holiday patrons "dressed to the nines." He admired the innate talent of the patrons when dancing salsa and merengue. "I'll never dance like Grandpa over there," he wrote. "Those dudes had moves...we had nothing on those old folks."

A self-described "kitchen superstar," Mr. Giuffo cites "The food was off the chain," regarding his holiday dinner at "O." It was the highlight of the evening, when the restaurant hosts escorted their guests to the Paseo Herencia rooftop to watch the midnight pyrotechnics, which "finally convinced me to relax and enjoy Aruba, for all of its contradictions and mixed messages." He describes watching the display that takes place on Aruba every New Year's Eve "as one of the best fireworks show I have seen in my life, and that's including those by Macy's, Gruccis and Disney" !!

"It was unlike any other New Year's Eve I had experienced," he tells his readers. "Something I'd only gotten in Aruba."

There are several things a reader can take away from the full article, found here: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johngiuffo/2013/12/31/arubas-surprisingly-impressive-new-years-eve/>

A major point to learn from the piece is it is worth exploring Aruba away from the resort areas, for a more authentic experience. Also, dedicate at least one evening to dinner at "O" Restaurant and Lounge, even if it is not New Year's Eve. Good food, music and company, with live bands on the weekends, will provide a true taste of island food and hospitality.

By Rosalie Klein



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The Year 2014 had begun and we had simple fun

By: Roland W. Peterson.

Never before in history was it ever seen
That is the year 2014
The streets filled with smoke
And believe me this was no joke



You could hardly see
your neighbor,
Jokingly everyone
wished the other a
Happy New Year
Even if you could not
see, but only hear
That was all you
could hear

There was Johnny
Chan
Who ignited the "pagarra"
There was no other who can
Then came Rudy with his clan
We all told jokes and had some fun

The pop of the champagne bottle was not even
heard,
as we sipped the champagne the cold breeze
settled in
It started to drizzle then
the neighbors went home

The year 2014 had begun
And we had simple fun.

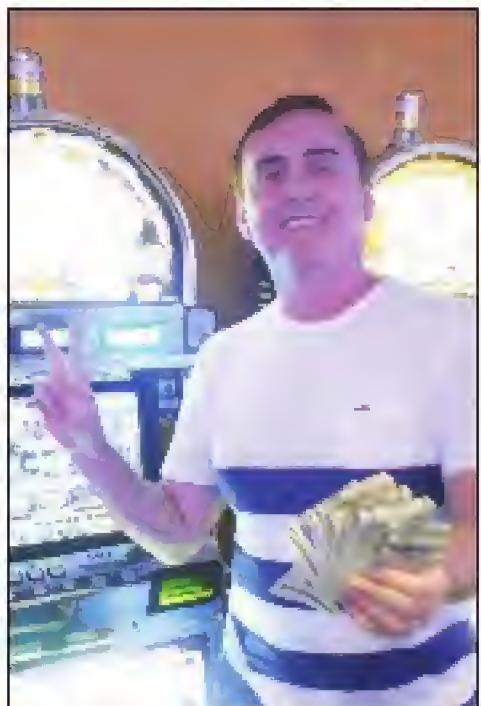
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At The Casino at the Radisson

Lucky winners celebrate the New Year with extra cash in their pockets

PALM BEACH — This past holiday season saw a ton of visitors at the Casino at the Radisson, celebrating the holidays as well as their jackpot winnings. Seen here, one lucky and very happy winner, all the way from Sao Paulo, Brazil, with a whopping jackpot prize of \$7,290.00.

Also happy to pose for a picture with her winnings, local visitor Barbara Figaroa Henriquez was playing the popular Gaminator machine when she hit the jackpot. Distracted by her husband, Barbara was surprised when her own machine lit up, announc-

ing her Sizzling 7 jackpot of \$2,000.00. Delighted with their winnings, Barbara's husband declared the Casino at the Radisson to be their favorite

casino on the island, saying: "To be a winner you have to visit the Casino at The Radisson hotel."

A New Year means new opportunities to win

at The Casino at the Radisson. The Bingo Progressive Jackpot currently stands at \$45,282.55 and counting, the largest progressive on

the Island. The Bad Beat Jackpot has reached \$16,960.86, while the Caribbean Stud Poker jackpot is offering up \$20,213.30.

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Kerry on third day of Mideast shuttle

JERUSALEM (AFP) - US Secretary of State John Kerry was Saturday to shuttle back and forth between Israeli and Palestinian leaders for a third day in an intense new phase of talks grasping for a peace deal.

After more than eight hours of talks on Thursday and Friday, Kerry was again to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he seeks to tie down a framework to guide negotiations towards a peace deal.

But US officials, who had already warned they were not expecting a breakthrough, acknowledged late Friday it was unlikely that agreement on a framework accord would be reached this week, conceding it would take more time.

Kerry met with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas for some six hours on Friday, and was due to have another round of talks with him in his West Bank headquarters on Saturday.

Both sides have voiced open scepticism about the

proposed framework, despite agreeing in July when direct talks were relaunched after a three-year hiatus not to comment in public.

"Netanyahu has serious, serious concerns about the plan as has been presented to him, whether it be on the ability of Israel to defend its borders or the reliability of a Palestinian state and their intentions," visiting Republican Senator John McCain said in Jerusalem after meeting the Israeli leader.

Israelis were particularly concerned about "their overall security, whether it be boundaries, whether it be areas under Palestinian control," he added.

And top Palestinian official Yasser Abed Rabbo was Thursday unenthusiastic about the proposed framework agreement, saying it "limits Palestinian sovereignty" on the West Bank.

But when Kerry was asked if he was gaining any traction in the talks as he met with Abbas in Ramallah, he replied: "Every day (is) progress."

Nuns in Spain red-faced after missing call from pope

MADRID (AFP) - A group of nuns in Spain got a New Year surprise when they checked their answerphone machine to discover they had missed a call from the Pope, who left a message asking why they didn't pick up.

"What can the nuns be doing that stops them answering the phone?" said Pope Francis, chuckling, in the message he left on New Year's Eve for the Barefoot Carmelites of Lucena, aired on Spanish radio on Friday.

"This is Pope Francis," he went on. "I wanted to give you New Year's greetings. I'll see if I can reach you later. God bless you."

The prioress of the convent, Sister Adriana, told COPE radio station she and the four other nuns were not listening for the phone because they were busy at their midday prayers.

She said the Pope was an old friend of some of the nuns in their group, who, like him, come from Argentina.

They now run the convent in a working class suburb of Lucena, a town near Cordoba in southern Spain.

"When my duties allowed me to go to the phone, I literally wanted to die" on hearing the missed message, Adriana said.

"I took down the message and passed it on to the other nuns. We told ourselves we had just been fulfilling our duty of prayer. We never thought the Pope would remember us."

She frantically called a bishop and other contacts to try and return the call to the Vatican, without success, but Francis called back and managed to talk to the nuns in the evening.

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'Fast and Furious' star's car doing over 100 mph: coroner

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - The car carrying late "Fast and Furious" star Paul Walker was doing over 100 miles (160 kilometers) per hour when it crashed, nearly cutting the high-powered vehicle in half, coroners said Friday.

The 40-year-old actor's body was charred beyond recognition in the November 30 accident, they said in a report describing the burned-out wreckage in graphic detail.

The \$400,000 2005 car was driven by Walker's friend Roger Rodas, who also died in the crash in Santa Clarita, north of Los Angeles, where they had attended a charity event.

Neither man tested positive for alcohol or drugs including marijuana, cocaine, opiates and methamphetamine, a coroner's report said.

adding that autopsies were conducted on December 3, but toxicology results were only confirmed Friday.

"The driver was driving a red Porsche Carrera GT... at an unsafe speed, approximately 100-plus miles per hour," said the report, citing an investigator's account of the crash.

The report said Walker

was found "wearing remnants of a black T-shirt, a pair of black jeans and a pair of gray boxer briefs" and was "lying supine in the passenger seat."

"The decedent was charred and in a pugilistic stance," it said, describing the posture of his body after the crash.

A coroner's spokesman said "pugilistic" described "how the muscles of the body contract due to the heat into a 'boxer-like' appearance."

The report said the driver

lost control of the car "for unknown reasons," causing it to spin around and hit a curb, after which the driver's side of the Porsche struck a tree and then a light post.

"The force of those collisions caused the vehicle to spin 180 degrees and continue in an easterly direction. The passenger side of the vehicle then struck another tree and burst into flames," it said.

"The vehicle was totaled with major traffic collision damage all around, and it appeared that the vehicle was almost split in half," the report added, saying: "The majority of the vehicle was also charred."

It said Walker's body "cannot be positively identified visually," adding that "due to the extent of the injuries, the decedent (was) not (a) viable candidate for tissue donation."

First New Year hooligans appear in fast-track courts, are sent to jail

THE HAGUE - handful of the 800 people arrested during the New Year festivities appeared in fast-track courts in The Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Amsterdam on Friday.

The first suspect was a man from The Hague who kicked a police officer while being arrested. He was jailed for four months, two suspended. He was also placed under curfew for this year's celebrations and ordered to pay the policeman €250 compensation.

In Rotterdam, a 41-year-old man who threw a bottle at police was jailed for 10 months, four suspended.

The judge said the incident was an attempt to inflict severe injuries on the officer concerned, the *Telegraaf* reports. The man claimed to remember nothing of the incident, saying he was under the influence of drink and drugs.

In Utrecht, a 29-year-old man was jailed for three months, one suspended, for hitting a police officer who was arresting his nephew. The youth was jailed for four weeks, two suspended, for throwing fireworks at the police.

In Amsterdam, a 27-year-old man who hit and spat at Dutch railway workers was found guilty of assault but freed. The court ruled the three days he spent in jail was sufficient punishment but also ordered him to pay €150 in compensation, the *Telegraaf* says.

The courts have been told to be tough on New Year revellers, with sentences increased by 200% for attacks on emergency service workers.

Dozens of Qaeda fighters killed in Iraq clashes

RAMADI (AFP) - Iraqi forces and tribesmen killed dozens of Al-Qaeda-linked militants Friday as they fought to dislodge them in and near the Anbar provincial capital of Ramadi, a senior militia leader said.

Parts of Ramadi and Fallujah, west of Baghdad, have been held by militants for days, harkening back to the years after the 2003 US-led invasion when both cities were insurgent strongholds.

Fighting began in the Ramadi area Monday, when security forces removed the main

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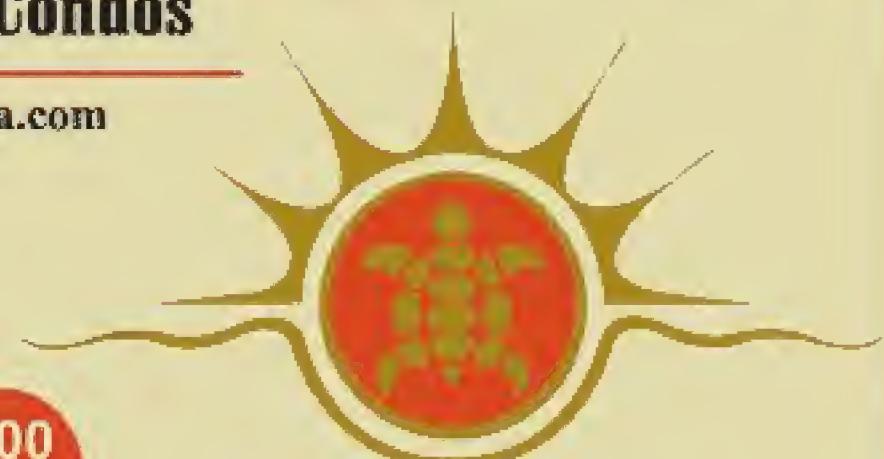


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Levant group in Khaldiyah, near Ramadi, and 46 more in the city itself

A police captain had earlier said fighters from ISIL, which operates in Syria as well, had advanced in early morning clashes into areas of central Ramadi and deployed snipers on one street.

But Iraqi police, SWAT forces and allied tribesmen later battled ISIL militants in the area, Lieutenant Colonel Muthanna al-Hazza told AFP.

A police colonel said the army had re-entered areas of

Fallujah, between Ramadi and Baghdad, but that around a quarter of the city remained under ISIL control.

Soldiers and tribesmen held the rest and had also surrounded the city, he said.

However, a police lieutenant colonel said that while soldiers had deployed around the city, they had not yet entered.

At least 14 people were killed on Monday and Tuesday in and near Ramadi.

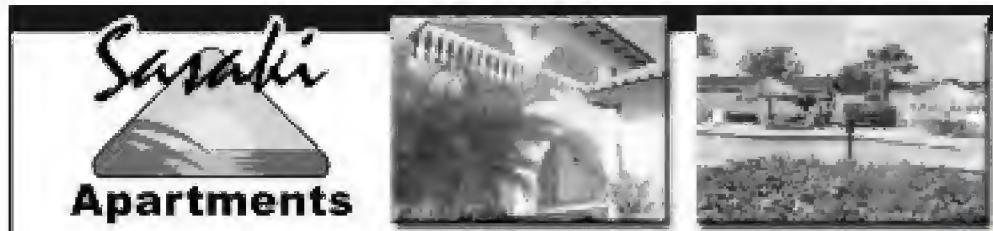
Fallujah was the target of two major assaults after the 2003 invasion, in which Amer-

ican forces saw some of their heaviest fighting since the Vietnam War.

American troops fought for years, aided by Sunni tribesmen in the *Sahwa* militia forces from late 2006, to wrest control of Anbar from militants.

During their time in Iraq, US forces suffered almost one-third of their total fatalities in Anbar, according to independent website icasualties.org.

But two years after US forces withdrew from Iraq, the power of militants in the province is again on the rise.



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Obamacare birth control mandate doesn't violate nuns' rights: US

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The US Justice Department on Friday asked the Supreme Court to throw out a challenge from a nuns' group against a birth control mandate in the Obamacare health reform law.

The Little Sisters of the Poor had asked the US high court to exempt it from the controversial birth control clause, saying that providing birth control was contrary to its religious beliefs.

The US government, in its written response, asked the court to lift the temporary block on birth control, arguing that the provision does not apply to the nuns anyway.

The Little Sisters' lawsuit is "not about the availability or adequacy of a religious accommodation," the Justice Department brief said.

Instead, the nuns group wants to "justify its refusal to sign a self-certification that secures the very religion-based exemption the objector seeks."

Justice Sonia Sotomayor had issued the temporary block on the birth control provision late Tuesday, giving the US government until Friday to provide its response.

The US administration wrote in its filing that the Obamacare law -- formally known as the Affordable Care Act -- does not require the nuns or any other nonprofit religious group to provide employees with insurance coverage for birth control.

The nuns had argued that signing a waiver -- which would allow an insurance administrator to provide the coverage through separate funding -- would make them complicit in making birth control available.

But the Justice Department noted that the administrator of the nun group's insurance -- which is itself a church group, itself -- is also exempt from providing coverage for birth control.

The landmark Affordable

Care Act (ACA) legislation was a bid by Obama to guarantee that uninsured Americans are afforded access to medical care, but opponents have objected strongly to various aspects of the law.

The birth control requirement has been one of the most controversial aspects of the US health law, and has received spirited pushback from religiously affiliated organizations.

Sotomayor had acted late New Year's Eve, just hours before major provisions of the Affordable Care Act law were to take effect, asking for the government's response by Friday. It was not clear when she would make her decision now that the government had filed.

Her order late Tuesday applied to the Little Sisters of the Poor and other Roman Catholic nonprofit groups that use a health plan called the Christian Brothers Employee Benefit Trust.

The US high court agreed in late November to hear several cases that could settle the dispute between the Obama administration and private companies run by Christian conservatives over whether those businesses must pay for birth control if contraceptive coverage conflicts with the religious beliefs of the business owner.

Since its passage in 2010, Obamacare has survived multiple repeal attempts by Republican lawmakers, a US Supreme Court hearing, and a disastrous rollout of the website set up to assist the launch of the legislation.

Under the law, it is illegal for insurers to deny coverage because of pre-existing conditions or to limit the level of annual reimbursements for essential services -- practices in the past which had left some patients facing financial ruin.

It also now is mandatory for any US resident to enroll in a health care plan.



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H1N1 flu claims five lives in Canada's Alberta province

MONTREAL (AFP) - An H1N1 flu outbreak in Alberta has sickened nearly 1,000 people and killed five, the Canadian province's health minister said Friday, urging everyone to get vaccinated.

"Over the past few weeks, we have seen a surge in the number of influenza cases across Alberta. Many of those affected are healthy young adults," Health Minister Fred Horne said in a statement.

In total, 965 cases of the flu have been confirmed by health authorities in the province, with just more than 250 requiring hospitalization, he explained.

"Sadly, five Albertans admitted to the ICU have died," Horne said, emphasizing that the age and health of the patients was unusual.

"It is concerning that we are seeing younger, working-age adults being hospitalized," he said.

So far, only around one in five residents have gotten flu shots, which, Horne emphasized, are needed to protect "you, your friends, family, co-workers and everyone you come into contact with."

"That includes vulnerable Albertans for whom the flu can mean serious illness or even death," he stressed.

To encourage vaccination efforts, the province has increased the number of centers

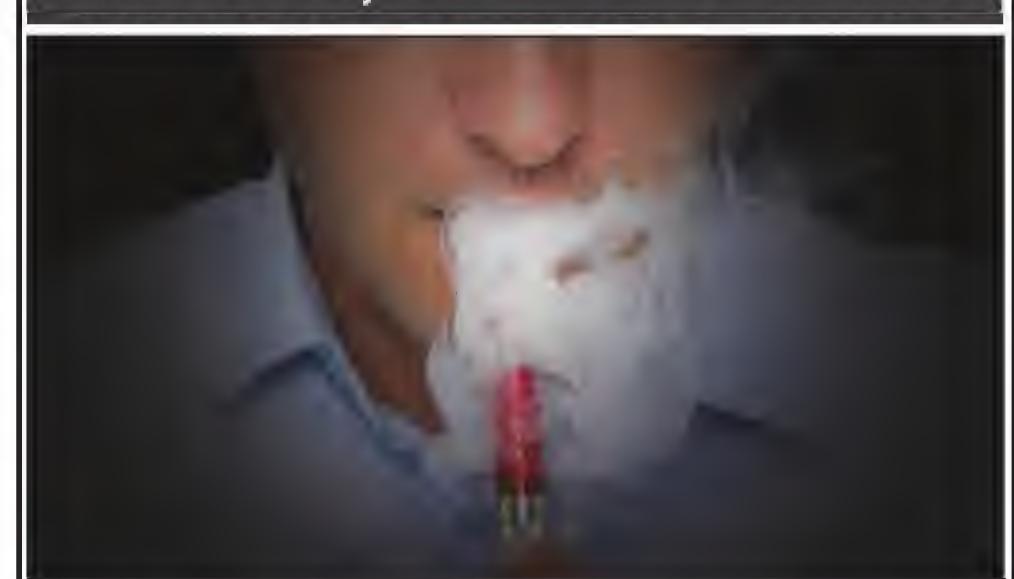
offering the shot and extended the hours. Local television showed long lines in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary.

The peak of the flu season typically comes in February, according to health authorities who fear a surge in cases that could overwhelm health centers.

In some parts of Alberta, "influenza is starting to clog emergency rooms, limit access to hospital beds and put strain on other health care resources," Horne said.

The outbreak is also starting to spread to other provinces, and one person reportedly died from the flu in Ontario.

E-cigarette vapor contains nicotine, not other toxins



NEW YORK - Researchers and regulators have questioned whether e-cigarettes are a smoking cessation aid or may lure more young people toward smoking, as well as what effects they have on health. They found that people standing near someone using an e-cigarette will be exposed to nicotine, but not to other chemicals found in tobacco cigarette smoke, according to a new study. E-cigarettes, or electronic cigarettes, create a nicotine-rich vapor that can be inhaled, or 'vaped.' E-cigarettes also produced some particulate matter, but regular cigarettes produced about seven times more. E-cigarettes didn't change the amount of carbon monoxide or other gases in the air.



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Kennedy Center 2013 Honorees



WASHINGTON - The celebration honors five outstanding people from the performing arts industry each year and this marks the 36th occasion for the event. The recipients are long time masters of their craft who have shown excellence and artistic achievement in their field for decades. In December, Kennedy Center Honors inducted Shirley MacLaine, Billy Joel, Carlos Santana, Herbie Hancock and Martina Arroyo at a special event attended by the President and First Lady along with other Hollywood and political elites.

New Springsteen album to get early streaming in US

NEW YORK (AFP) - Bruce Springsteen fans will be able to stream all 12 tracks of the rocker's new "High Hopes" album starting Sunday -- if they're in the United States, that is.

Broadcaster CBS said Thursday it will host the pre-release at www.cbs.com/springsteen ahead of a January 12 episode of its legal drama "The Good Wife" featuring three songs from the record.

But a CBS spokeswoman told AFP that "streaming of the album is restricted to the United States only" -- leaving fans abroad to cool their heels until "High Hopes" gets its general release on January 14.

Some fans already have The Boss's 18th studio album -- his first since "Wrecking Ball" in 2012 -- on their digital players after it briefly popped up on Amazon.com as an MP3 download last weekend.

Springsteen's label is Columbia Records, a Sony Music Entertainment subsidiary formerly owned by CBS that was behind the surprise online release of Beyoncé's fifth album on December 13.

"Beyoncé" is currently spending its third week atop the Billboard 200 album

chart, having sold more than 1.3 million copies.

"High Hopes" is a mix of cover versions, studio outtakes and re-recordings which Springsteen -- who has concerts upcoming in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand -- has called "music I always felt needed to be released."



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EARLY BIRD SPECIAL

Talk and die: The invisible threat from brain injuries

PARIS (AFP) - Blows to the head can be silent killers for which swift diagnosis is often the only recourse, say doctors.

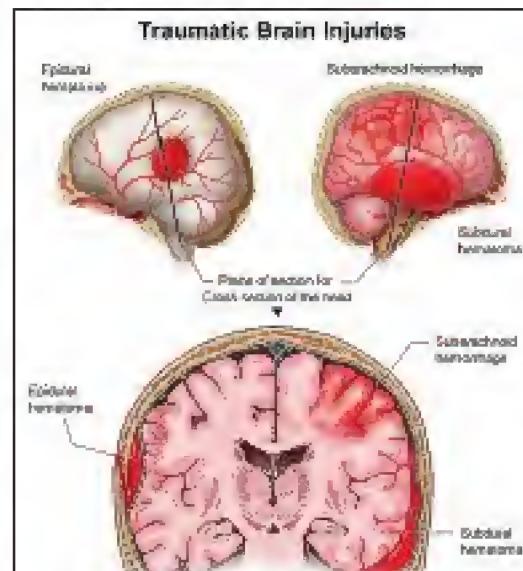
Even if there is no damage to the outside of the head, the impact may inflict catastrophic damage to the brain inside, they say.

Because a shock that smashes the brain, a 1.3-kilo (2.8-pound) organ with the consistency of soft jelly, against the hard protective shell of the skull, can damage nerves, brain cells and blood vessels.

Blood clots and bruising then result, which in turn causes pressure to build up and squeeze the brain, worsening the damage and amplifying the risk of permanent handicap or death.

Doctors looking at suspected brain trauma can call on X-rays or hi-tech 3-D scanners as diagnostic tools, but treatment options are relatively few. Drugs may ease rising pressure in the brain but sometimes surgery is required.

In the case of Formula 1 star Michael Schumacher -- diag-



nosed immediately after his skiing accident on Sunday -- neurosurgeons first operated to tackle bleeding and bruising and then placed him in an artificial coma after a post-operative scan showed "widespread lesions" on both sides of the brain.

Tried and tested, the coma reduces the patient's temperature to around 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) to reduce swelling. By being unconscious, the brain is also switched off to sounds, light and other triggers that cause the organ to use up oxygen as it processes the stimuli.

Tried and tested, the coma reduces the patient's temperature to around 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) to reduce swelling. By being unconscious, the brain is also switched off to sounds, light and other triggers that cause the organ to use up oxygen as it processes the stimuli.

It can take up to 48 hours for symptoms of brain injury to emerge, which is why anyone who suffers even mild concussion should seek medical attention, said Truelle.

According to a 2007 Australasian study in the Journal of Clinical Neuroscience, around one in every 40 cases of head injury documented over a 10-year period at a major trauma centre were of so-called "talk-and-die" syndrome.

This means the patients initially felt okay after the incident but subsequently deteriorated and died from intracranial causes.

One suspected "talk-and-die" case is that of actress Natasha Richardson, the wife of star Liam Neeson, who died after an apparently innocuous tumble on a beginners' ski slope in 2009.

Brain injuries may also result from repeated concussive blows, rather than a single extreme incident, which is why high-impact sports such as American football, rugby and ice hockey are under close scrutiny at the moment.

Bump, Flock apps to be discontinued

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) - Smartphone file-sharing apps Bump and Flock have announced that they will be discontinued at the end of January.

US Internet giant Google bought the Bump Technologies startup behind the apps in September for a deal reportedly worth between \$30 million and \$60 million.

"We are now deeply focused on our new projects within Google, and we've decided to discontinue Bump and Flock," Bump co-founder and chief executive David Lieb wrote in a blog post late Tuesday.

On January 31, Bump and Flock will be removed from both the App Store and Google Play, after which neither app will work and all user data will be deleted.

Over the coming weeks, users can export their data by opening either app and following instructions. They will then receive an email with a link containing their photos, videos, contacts and other data.

Lieb thanked users for their feedback, enthusiasm and support over the years, saying it "brought much meaning to our work."

"In many ways, Bump was

a revolutionary product that inspired many subsequent advances and helped push the world forward," Lieb wrote. "We hope our new creations at Google will do the same."

The Bump application lets smartphone users easily share data by gently knocking knuckles while holding devices.

Flock software taps into smartphone location-sensing technology to note when friends are in proximity of one another and lets them contribute to sets of photos reflecting shared experiences such as a concert or sporting events.

Blazing cannabis trail, US states eye tourism surge

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Colorado and Washington became the first US states to legalize recreational pot shops on January 1.

Blazing a trail they hope will be followed in other parts of the United States, cannabis growers and others are also rubbing their hands, while tax collectors are eyeing the revenue the newly-legalized trade will generate.

Enterprising companies are even offering marijuana tours to cash in on tourists expected to be attracted to a Netherlands-style pot culture -- including in Colorado's famous ski resorts.

"Just the novelty alone is bringing people from everywhere," said Adam Raleigh of cannabis supplier Telluride Bud Co.

Medical marijuana is already legal and regulated in 19 US states, and has been allowed in some cases for the past 20 years. And in most of them, private consumption of cannabis is not classified as a crime.

But Colorado and Washington are creating a recreational market in which local authorities will oversee growing, distribution and marketing -- all of it legal -- for people to get high just for the fun of it.

The market is huge: from \$1.4 billion in medical marijuana in 2013 it will grow by 64 percent to \$2.34 billion in 2014

with recreational pot added in Colorado and Washington, according to Arcview Market Research, which tracks and publishes data on the cannabis industry.

Both states legalized recreational consumption of marijuana in referendums in November last year, but new rules coming into force on January 1 allow cannabis shops.

In Colorado, famous for its Rocky Mountain ski resorts, officials this week issued 348 retail marijuana licenses including for small shops which from January 1 can sell up to 28 grams of pot to people aged 21 or older.

Washington state authorities have received applications for 3,746 marijuana business licenses, including 867 retail licenses, according to The Seattle Times newspaper, which urged caution in an editorial.

Colorado's branch of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) said everyone will benefit.

"It will mean jobs, tax revenue for the state and local jurisdictions, increased tourism, and a developing progressive new industry in Colorado," NORML attorney Rachel Gillette told AFP.

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US Senate to vote Monday on Yellen for Federal Reserve



WASHINGTON (AFP) - The US Senate will vote Monday on the nomination of Janet Yellen to replace outgoing Ben Bernanke as chair of the Federal Reserve, Senate Democratic staff said Friday.

Yellen, currently the Fed vice-chair, easily passed a Senate Banking Committee vote in November, but the full Senate vote stalled amid other key business in the chamber and tangles between Democrats and Republicans over nomination procedures generally.

A vote endorsing her nomination would clear the way for Yellen to take the lead at the Fed on February 1, the first

woman ever to lead the US central bank.

At 67, Yellen has built a strong reputation as an academic economist, teaching at the University of California at Berkeley, and as a veteran policymaker at the Fed.

She is not expected to embark on any major policy shifts: she has been a close ally of Bernanke's easy money policy focused on reducing unemployment in the wake of the 2008-2009 Great Recession.

She has also been an architect of the Fed's policy of increased transparency and more open communication of its likely policy direction.

Panama, Spain seek to resolve \$1.6 bn canal row

PANAMA CITY (AFP) - The governments of Panama and Spain scrambled Friday to resolve a dispute with a consortium threatening to halt expansion work on the Panama Canal over a \$1.6 billion cost overrun. Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli said Spanish Public Works Minister Ana Pastor will fly to the Central American country this weekend to mediate between his government and the construction group led by Spanish builder Sacyr. The president and minister will meet on Monday with Panama Canal Authority Administrator Jorge Quijano. The Grupo Unidos por el Canal (GUPC) consortium, which includes Italian, Belgian and Panamanian companies, has threatened to suspend the project in three weeks if canal authorities fail to pay the massive extra charges. The project aims to make the 80-kilometer (50-mile) waterway, which handles five percent of global maritime trade, big enough to handle new, so-called mega cargo ships that can carry 12,000 containers. In a letter to canal authorities dated December 30, Sacyr gave a 21-day deadline for Panama to pay the extra charges or they will suspend its \$3.2 billion contract to expand the capacity of canal. The overall cost of the project has been estimated at \$5.2 billion. The new locks will accommodate larger ships with a capacity of 12,000 containers - instead of those with 5,000 containers that are now able to navigate the canal.



Bernanke urges more action to cement economic recovery

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, who steps down at the end of January, called Friday for more action to ensure the United States recovers from the economic and financial crisis.

In a speech at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Bernanke retraced the eight years he spent at the helm of the US central bank as it tackled the 2008 financial crisis and the Great Recession.

"Needless to say, my tenure has been eventful -- for the Federal Reserve, for the country, and for me personally," Bernanke said, according to the text of his speech.

"We took extraordinary measures to meet extraordinary economic challenges," said the chairman, who will be succeeded on February 1.

Highlighting that the US unemployment rate fell from 10

percent in 2009 to 7.0 percent recently, Bernanke nevertheless insisted: "Much progress has been made, but more remains to be done."

The jobless rate "still is elevated," he said, reiterating concerns about the "unusually high" number of long-term unemployed and declining participation in the labor force, in part probably due to workers discouraged by poor job prospects.

Bernanke said that an important factor holding back the economy was "disappointing" productivity growth.

He said it may be the result of the severity of the financial crisis that tightened credit conditions, inhibiting innovation, or may reflect longer-term trends unrelated to the recession.

He said the Fed's decision in mid-December to modestly taper its \$85 billion a month asset-purchase program did not indicate any lesser com-

mitment to maintain an easy-money policy "for as long as needed."

Instead, the taper "reflected the progress we have made toward our goal of substantial improvement in the labor market outlook that we set out when we began the current purchase program in September 2012."

The Fed intends to keep its key interest rate near zero "well past" the time that the unemployment threshold of 6.5 percent is crossed, he said, particularly if inflation continues to run below 2.0 percent.

Bernanke emphasized his efforts to make the central bank more transparent, saying it had been one of his initial goals when he took the post in February 2006, just as the housing price bubble collapsed and triggered the financial crisis.

US stocks Friday closed out a holiday-shortened week mostly lower.

Most Dutch workers will be better off in 2014 but high earners take home less

THE HAGUE - Most workers will have higher take-home pay in 2014 and low earners will benefit most, according to salary processor ADP.

The organisation looked at the impact of government policy on wages and concluded people on salaries of up to €1,750 a month will benefit most from tax cuts and other benefits in 2014.

For example, someone earning the minimum wage - €1,485.60 for an adult - will be €55 a month better off because of lower taxes and a higher tax-free allowance.

However, people earning over €6,500 a month will have up to €52 a month less to spend, ADP says.

Pensioners will also benefit from the lower tax rate and cheaper health insurance.

Nevertheless, changes in company pension premiums will also have an impact on take-home pay, RTL points out.

For example, people in the engineering and metal working

sector will be better off because of a cut in monthly pension premiums.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer

| | |
|-------|---------|
| GREG | MAP |
| SLAVE | ELLIS |
| HOVER | MAUVE |
| EVIL | ESSEN |
| LEN | PUNK |
| FRED | ASTAIRE |
| | IMSON |
| CREEP | NAPE |
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| ALS | MAYS |



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ACROSS

- 1 Martinelli et al.
- 6 "Family ___" (Hitch-cock)
- 10 Went to the plate
- 12 "___ Precious Love"
- 13 Chest of drawers
- 14 Pretense
- 15 Groom's phrase (2 wds.)
- 16 Dinner
- 18 Actress Campbell
- 20 Take it on the ___
- 21 Garbo of films
- 23 Lawful
- 27 Lend a hand
- 29 Auto dealer's model
- 30 Pooh's friend
- 33 Vinyl records (abbr.)

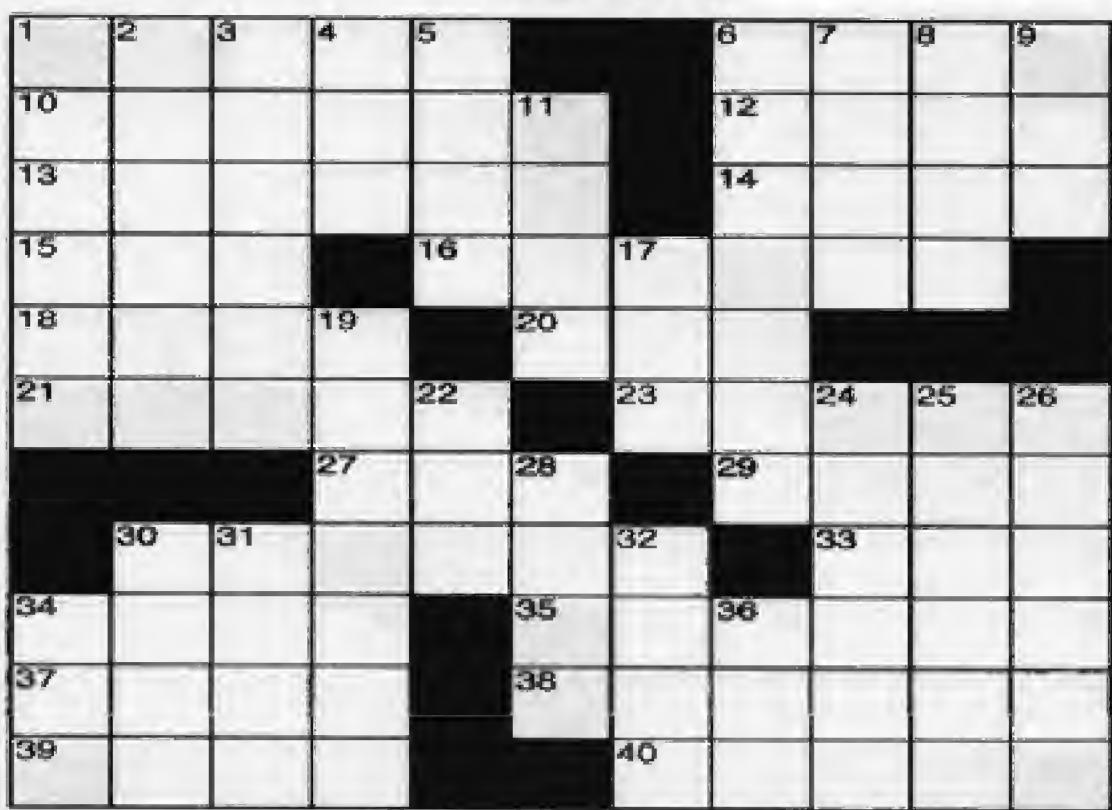
34 Columnist Barry

- 35 Super-market divisions
- 37 Manipulator
- 38 Ten years
- 39 Jimmy Durante's trademark
- 40 Begat

DOWN

- 1 Waning
- 2 Praiser
- 3 Tried very hard

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 Munched on | holder |
| 5 Burn | 22 Feel lousy |
| 6 Pharaoh's tomb | 24 Basement |
| 7 Actor Gossett et al. | 25 Hinder progress |
| 8 Remove from office | 26 Flung |
| 9 Three (Ital.) | 28 The Grateful |
| 11 Fencing match | 30 El ___ |
| 17 Comrade | 31 Singer Burl |
| 19 Bric-a-brac | 32 Binds |
| | 34 Urge payment |
| | 36 ___-fi |



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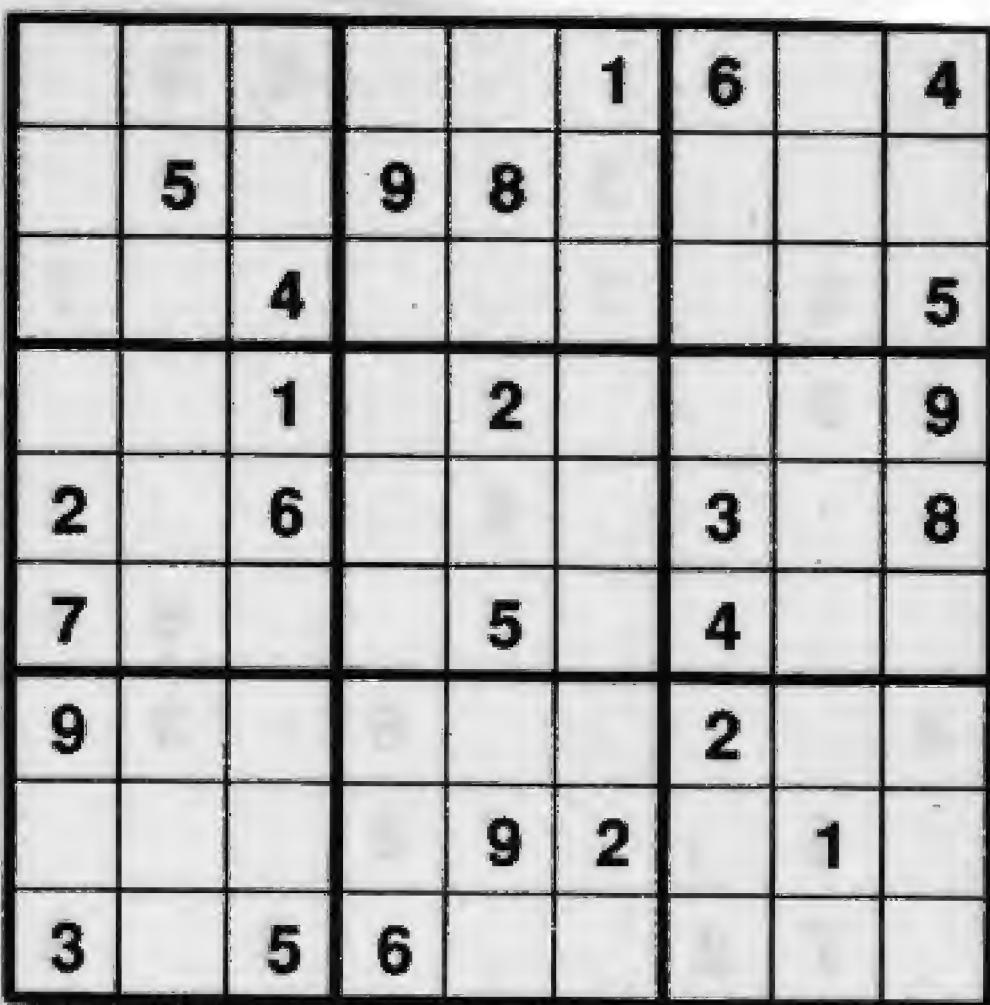
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Sudoku



SOLUTION

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 7 |
| 4 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| 9 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 8 |
| 7 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| 2 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| 5 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 9 |
| 1 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 1 |
| 8 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 4 |

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

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Discover authentic Aruban cuisine at The Queen's



Enjoy a true taste of Aruba without having to travel in the charming surroundings of The Queen's Restaurant in the Palm Beach Plaza Mall. Your host, Varella Immocencia has brought her very popular Oranjestad eatery to Palm Beach, showcasing authentic local cuisine only a short walk away from the major resorts.

The "hipper" and elegant new digs offer beautiful views, but Mama Luisa's magical touch in the kitchen is what



first won this charming eatery their loyal clientele. She can be counted on to be conjuring up the delicious dishes that have been in her family for generations. As Varella says, "My mom loves and lives to cook. Even when she is not at work in the restaurant, she is experimenting with new dishes all day at home."

She is the Queen of the Kitchen."

Be sure to try Luisa's acclaimed "Carni Stoba di Ma-

machi" - "Grandma's Beef Stew," or their fresh, whole snapper, with Mama Luisa's delectable salsa criollo. Don't miss the specialty of the house, a favorite local delicacy, Keshi Yena - "Filled Cheese." This is a tasty, filling stew of chicken, with other ingredients that are handy that day, all encased in a thick skin of melted Gouda. It is satisfying and particularly memorable. Regional side dishes and some of Mama's secret recipe prepara-



Mama Luisa hard at work in the kitchen

tion of banana hasa and creamy potatoes provide a deliciously picturesque meal.

The Queen's is located on the second level of Palm Beach Plaza tucked into a cozy corner at the front of the mall. If you have a mind to try the real deal in Aruban food, without a doubt, this is the way to go, reasonably priced and easily accessible. A full menu can be seen on their website, <http://www.thequeensaruba.com/>.

Aside from an extensive regular menu they also have daily specials made from whatever is in season, and Mama Luisa is in the mood to prepare, so don't be shy about asking for something that may not be on the menu, as they are always eager to please.

The Queen's is open daily from 3:00 pm - 11:00 pm, offering both indoor and outdoor dining.

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Football: Southampton's Osvaldo banned after Newcastle brawl

LONDON (AFP) - Southampton striker Dami Osvaldo was fined £40,000 (\$65,000, 48,000 euros) and suspended for three matches on Friday for his part in a touchline brawl during an ill-tempered Premier League clash at Newcastle.

Osvaldo, an Argentina-born Italy international, was watching from the sidelines after already being substituted during the 1-1 draw on December 14 when he reacted angrily to an aggressive tackle in stoppage-time.

The ugly scenes were sparked by Southampton midfielder Morgan Schneiderlin's yellow card for a late challenge on Newcastle defender Massadio Haidara.

Staff and players from both benches became embroiled in a touchline ruckus, with referee Mike Jones sending Newcastle coach Andy Woodman and Saints back-room staff member Toni Jimenez to the stands.

Osvaldo's ban takes immediate effect after the charge of violent conduct was proved by an FA independent regulatory commission hearing.

The 27-year-old, who joined Southampton for a club record £12.8 million in August last year, is ruled out of Saturday's FA Cup third round tie against Burnley.

Newcastle coach Woodman has been fined £1,250 and warned as to his future conduct after he admitted a charge of improper conduct.

Camera on Schumacher's ski helmet inspected

GRENOBLE (AFP) - A camera fixed to the ski helmet of Michael Schumacher is being inspected by investigators probing the accident that has left the German retired racing legend comatose in a French hospital with critical head injuries.

A source close to French authorities handling the investigation disclosed the existence of the camera late Friday.

The source said it had been taken to see if it can yield any clues as to the circumstances of the accident.

Schumacher's 14-year-old son Mick, who was skiing with

his father at the time, was also being questioned by investigators, the source said, confirming information reported by the French newspaper Dauphine Libere.

The developments in the probe came the day Schumacher turned 45 while still in an induced coma in a hospital in the French Alpine city of Grenoble after his December 29 accident.

Questions have emerged over exactly how the accident happened on a small, seemingly innocuous off-piste section of Meribel located between two ski slopes -- one

classed as easy and the other as intermediate.

The camera could be valuable in providing information. Schumacher's manager, Sabine Kehm, refused to comment on what it might contain or where it has been kept since the accident.

"That is among several things about which I will not comment," she said.

Schumacher's son, and a friend of his who was also skiing at the time, were being asked to give eyewitness testimony.

Prosecutors are also looking at whether the limits of the pistes next to the accident site were correctly marked, and whether the safety releases on Schumacher's skis operated properly.

There have been conflicting statements about the speed Schumacher was going when he crashed.

Schumacher, who made his debut in 1991, dominated Formula One during his career, winning more world titles and races than any other driver.

He retired definitively in 2012, at the end of a disappointing two-year comeback from an earlier attempt to quit racing.

Football: Ronaldo to be honoured by Portuguese president



LISBON (AFP) - Cristiano Ronaldo is to be awarded one of the most prestigious honours in Portugal for his services to the country in a ceremony next week.

The Real Madrid forward will receive the Ordem do Infante Dom Henrique, the Order of Prince Henry, from Portuguese president Anibal Cavaco Silva for contributing to the international image of the country and serving as "an example of tenacity for younger generations".

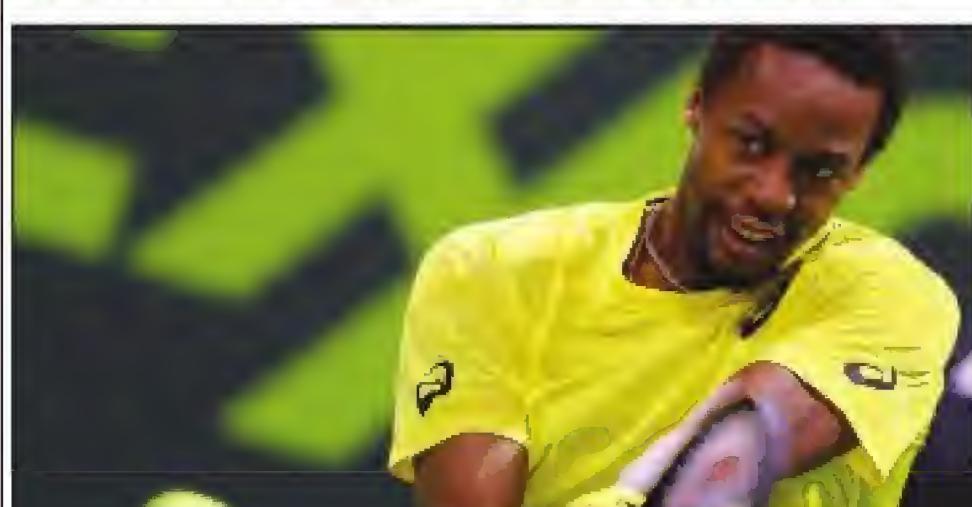
A statement from the presidency said that Ronaldo had been "a symbol for Portugal throughout the world".

The 28-year-old will receive an honour that was created in 1960 to mark the 500th anniversary of the death of one of the most important figures in the Portuguese Empire.

The ceremony will take place Tuesday at the presidential palace in Belem, just outside Lisbon, less than a week before the Ballon d'Or gala in Zurich, Switzerland on January 13.

Ronaldo, who won the Ballon d'Or in 2008, is one of the three finalists for the 2013 prize alongside Lionel Messi of Barcelona and Bayern Munich's Franck Ribery.

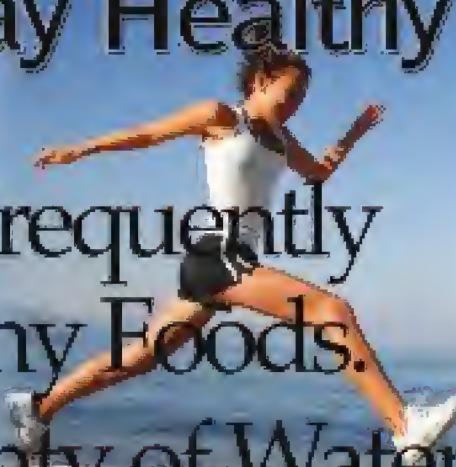
Tennis: Nadal to meet Monfils in Doha final



DOHA (AFP) - World number one Rafael Nadal will play Frenchman Gael Monfils in the Qatar Open final after beating surprise package Peter Gojowczyk in the semi-final on Friday. Nadal's 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 victory confirmed him as the overwhelming favourite to take the title and do something he has never done before, win a tournament in the opening week of the year. The Guadeloupe-born former world number seven Monfils appears more focussed and motivated than for a long time, and has apparently recovered from a wrist problem, the last in a long line of depressing injuries. His 6-3, 6-2 win over Florian Mayer, the conqueror of Wimbledon champion Andy Murray, was however assisted by the German's very evident tiredness after three hard three-set matches in three days.

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Tennis: Williams, Azarenka to meet in Brisbane final



BRISBANE (AFP) - World number one Serena Williams will meet the second ranked Victoria Azarenka in the final of the Brisbane International after she downed Maria Sharapova in an enthralling semi-final Friday.

Williams, the defending champion, beat Sharapova 6-2, 7-6 (9/7) in one hour, 43 minutes on Pat Rafter Arena.

Earlier, Azarenka recovered from a disastrous first set to beat Serbia's Jelena Jankovic 1-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Williams and Sharapova have a fierce rivalry on the court, which is matched by an at times bitter relationship off it.

They didn't hold back during their semi-final, thrilling the packed stadium with the power and depth of their ground-strokes.

Both women struggled to hold their serves throughout, although Williams was slightly more consistent, breaking Sharapova three times in the first set while losing hers only once, despite making only 40 percent of her first serves.

Williams and Azarenka have met 16 times on the WTA tour with the American holding a 13-3 advantage.

However, they met four times on the court last year with honours even at two wins apiece.

"She's had some tough matches, I've had a few tough matches," Williams said of her clash with Azarenka.

NFL: Bears re-sign quarterback Cutler



CHICAGO (AFP) - Quarterback Jay Cutler, who missed four games with an ankle injury this season, has re-signed with the Chicago Bears, the National Football League team announced Thursday. Cutler's seven-year deal will take him through the 2020 NFL season. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. The Bears re-signed Cutler despite losing their final two games of the season and finished with a 8-8 record. Some NFL observers felt backup Josh McCown played better during Cutler's four-game absence but it wasn't enough to convince first-year coach Marc Trestman that McCown should take over the starting role permanently. Eight-year veteran Cutler completed 63.1 percent of his passes for 2,621 yards with 19 touchdowns and 12 interceptions this past season.

Putin puts on skis to inspect Sochi Winter Olympics site



MOSCOW (AFP) - Russian President Vladimir Putin polished his action-man credentials Friday by skiing in Sochi on the first day of a visit to the host city of the Winter Olympic Games opening in a month.

The leader -- who in the past has been photographed fishing and horse-riding bare-chested, piloting aircraft and a submarine, hang-gliding, playing ice hockey and practising judo -- donned a black ski-suit along with Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev for a run close to a complex that will be used for downhill and biathlon compe-

titions in the Olympics.

The Winter Olympic Games are to take place February 7-23.

Putin's visit, which a spokesman said would last several days, comes after suicide bombings December 29 and 30 in the southern city of Volgograd, 700 kilometres (400 miles) from Sochi, that counted as the deadliest attacks in Russia in three years.

Putin has staked his image and prestige on a successful and safe Olympics. Russia has poured more than \$50 billion into the event and has imposed tight security in and around Sochi and in nearby cities.



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NFL: Colts hope for deep postseason run

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - The Indianapolis Colts are seeking to crash the Super Bowl party by becoming the first wild card team since Green Bay in 2010 to make a run deep into the NFL playoffs.

History shows that a team from the wild card round usually makes some kind of post-season run and the Colts hope that holds true for them.

"If you check out the last six Super Bowl winners, they got hot at the right time," Colts defensive end Robert Mathis said. "That's what it is all about. Getting hot at the right time."

The fourth seeded Colts host the Kansas City Chiefs Saturday in one of four wild card games this weekend.

The postseason kicks off with the wild card round followed by the divisional round on January 11, the semi-final conference championships on January 19 and the Super Bowl on February 2.

Six of the last eight Super Bowl champions were teams that took part in the wild card round, including Green Bay in 2010.

Indianapolis comes into the



contest riding a hot streak, having won three straight games in which they allowed a total of 20 points.

Quarterback Andrew Luck finished his sophomore regular season on a positive note by completing 26-of-37 passes for 382 yards as the Colts rolled to a 30-10 win over Jacksonville on Sunday.

Luck threw 23 touchdown passes for the second-consecutive year and threw just nine interceptions.

He also finished the regular

season with 8,196 career passing yards, the first player in NFL history to crack the 8,000-barrier in just two seasons.

Kansas City has faced Indianapolis three previous times in the playoffs (1996, 2004 and 2007) with the Colts winning all three.

The Chiefs stumbled into these playoffs by losing their last two games and going 2-5 following a superb 9-0 start to the season.

Like the Colts, the San

Diego Chargers come into the playoffs on a high, having won four straight as they prepare to face the Cincinnati Bengals on Sunday at Paul Brown Stadium.

"A lot of crazy things happen in the playoffs and we feel confident in the group we have," said Chargers receiver Eddie Royal.

The Chargers are the most unlikely of the NFL's 12 playoff teams. They needed help to get into the postseason which they received when the Baltimore Ravens and Miami Dolphins lost their final two contests.

The Chargers and Bengals will be facing each other in the playoffs for the first time since the "Freezer Bowl".

Early forecasts for Sunday's game have temperatures dropping to about five degrees Celsius (41 Fahrenheit) which is a quite different than the last time San Diego played a playoff contest there.

In NFL lore, the "Freezer Bowl" was the AFC championship game between the Chargers and the Bengals in January 1982.

The Bengals easily won 27-

7 in what was the coldest temperature in NFL history in terms of wind chill. Air temperature was -22 Celsius, with the wind chill dipping down to -38 due to sustained winds of 43 kilometres (27 miles) per hour.

The wintry weather at Green Bay's Lambeau Field is expected to be the great equalizer when the Packers host the San Francisco Giants on Sunday afternoon.

These teams have seen plenty of each other over the past two seasons.

San Francisco snapped an eight-game losing streak in Green Bay with a 30-22 win in the opening week last season, though the temperature was hardly a factor given the game took place in early September.

"You just have to block it out," said 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick of how the team will adjust to the cold weather.

In the other wild card contest, the Philadelphia Eagles are in the playoffs for the first time since 2010 as they face the high-powered New Orleans Saints on Saturday at Lincoln Financial field.